

5.11 Effects of Program/Alternative Implementation on Utilities and Energy

This section summarizes the impacts resulting from implementing either the Proposed Program or any of its Alternatives to utilities and energy, including the electricity grid, telecommunications facilities, and water supply facilities.

5.11.1 Significance Criteria

An impact to utilities and energy is considered to be significant if the Program and Alternatives would:

- Cause substantial alterations to water, wastewater, or power systems.
- Cause substantial disruption in utility service or access to public facilities.
- Cause substantial damage to utilities, utility service or public facilities within the project area.

5.11.2 Determination Threshold

Any direct damage to water, power or telecom facilities from a project would be considered a significant impact.

5.11.3 Data and Assumptions

Evaluation of the potential significant effects are unnecessary for most of the criteria found in the CEQA checklist because the program/alternatives do not fund any building projects or the development of any permanent facilities requiring power or water.

Some of the treatments could result in impacts to wastewater treatment facilities due to erosion from projects, but this is addressed in the water quality Section 5.7.

It is anticipated that some material generated by the Program might be removed to a biomass plant concurrent with Program operation. Because the cost to remove such fuel is high, it is anticipated that no more than 10% of mechanical treatments might generate biomass, and only then when the material is chipped on site and only when the projects are near an existing biomass plant. Also, several bioregions have few to no biomass plants including the Mojave, Colorado Desert, South Coast and Bay Area Delta, such that little if any biomass produced from mechanical treatments is expected to be removed from the project site. Removal of material for commercial purposes will require an additional CEQA review, most likely through filing a timber harvest plan, or filing for one of several exemptions available to landowners under the Forest Practice Rules.

5.11.4 Direct Effects Common to all Bioregions from Implementing the Program/Alternatives

The primary mechanism by which the VTP program could have a significant adverse effect would be through an escaped prescribed burn damaging a water, power or telecom facility. The mechanical, hand, herbicide and herbivory treatments would all be confined to the project area.

Environmental Impact Analysis -- Utilities and Energy

Table 5.11.1 Summary of Effects^{1/} On Utilities And Energy from Implementing the Proposed Program				
Bioregion	Prescribed Fire	Mechanical	Hand	Herbivory
North Coast/Klamath	NA	NA	NA	NA
Modoc	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sacramento Valley	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sierra	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bay Area	NA	NA	NA	NA
San Joaquin	NA	NA	NA	NA
Central Coast	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mojave	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Coast	NA	NA	NA	NA
Colorado Desert	NA	NA	NA	NA

^{1/} Key to effects; adverse effects are those effects which degrade the diversity, structure, size, integrity, abundance or number of; or are outside the natural range of variability, for the resource at issue. Beneficial effects are those effects that improve the diversity, structure, size, integrity, abundance or number of; or are within the natural range of variability, for the resource at issue. SA/SB – significant adverse effects are those effects that are substantial, highly noticeable, at the watershed scale; and often irreversible. MA/MB - moderately adverse or beneficial effects - those effects that can be detected beyond the affected area, but are transitory and usually reversible. NA/NB - negligible adverse or beneficial effects - those effects that are imperceptible or undetectable.

5.11.5 Determination of Significance

No significant adverse impacts that would damage water, power or telecom facilities from a project are expected from implementing the Program or any of the Alternatives. Significant adverse effects are not expected as the odds of a prescribed fire escaping are very low, and with the checklist items below the odds of a prescribed fire escaping and then burning a utility or energy facility are even lower and not considered significant.

5.11.6 Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project

No mitigation measures are required. However, the following checklist items will be included in the environmental checklist.

5.11.7-1 Checklist Item: Are there any transmission lines or other electrical, telecom or water supply facilities in or near the project area? Protective measures need to be taken and may include installation of firebreaks using hand treatments around sensitive equipment.

5.11.7-2 Checklist Item: If treatments will include digging below the surface of the ground to a depth of >2 feet, project manager should contact local utilities to determine location of buried underground utilities.